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AUTHOR Rominger, Duane A.
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ABSTRACT

The 1996 hearing of the Minnesota State Council on Vocational Technical Education included testimony from 13 individuals representing state agencies, local education agencies, professional and public policy organizations, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Testimony indicated that secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical education would play an important role not only in ensuring employability, but in maximizing earning power at all stages of an individual's work life. Three recent trends have had a negative impact on secondary vocational-technical education: general erosion in secondary vocational leadership; elimination of equipment reimbursement for secondary vocational education; and relaxation of program rules, staff licensure, and staff development. Tech prep had assisted in establishing new levels of experiences for students. The tech prep consortia had renewed interest in identifying and collecting information on vocational and technical education students. The most important role of the school-to-work legislation and initiative was its focus on total school reform. The Governor's Workforce Development Council was just beginning to define itself and its mission. The entire work force education and training system was faced with the following needs: developing and identifying emerging skills; knowing of projected job openings; having performance data on programs, courses, and providers; and collecting information on employer needs. Problems with correctional education were data follow-up and transitional support for released inmates. (A list of questions of interest at the public hearing is appended.) (YLB)

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**State Council on
Vocational Technical Education**
STATE OF MINNESOTA

ED 404 544

**The 1996
Public Hearing of
the State Council**

Report

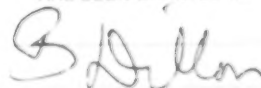
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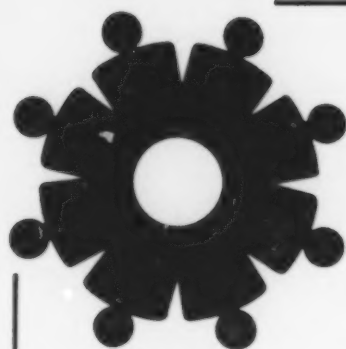
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The 1996 Public Hearing of the State Council

August 1996

Prepared by Duane A. Rominger

**State Council on Vocational Technical Education
366 Jackson St., Suite 314
St. Paul, MN 55101**

Acknowledgments

The Council wishes to thank the many individuals who shared their time, experience, and expertise with the Council at its 1996 Public Hearing. It is through such testimony that the Council is able to align its work plan with the current and future needs of the workforce education and training system in Minnesota.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Public Hearing

Each year, the State Council on Vocational Technical Education holds a public hearing, providing an opportunity for the public to express its opinions on aspects of vocational and technical education in the State of Minnesota. The State Council is mandated by Title I, Part B, §112c of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990 to hold at least one public hearing per year.

The 1996 Public Hearing

Seventeen cable commissions and 20 newspapers throughout Minnesota were contacted with requests to publish the announcement of this meeting statewide. In addition, 270 notices of the Public Hearing were sent to:

- all local secondary vocational directors or administrators
- all tech prep consortia contact persons
- all technical college campus presidents
- state-level administrators in secondary vocational education (the Office of Lifework Development at the Department of Children, Families and Learning)
- state-level administrators in postsecondary vocational technical education (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities)
- state-level administrators in public employment and training (Department of Economic Security)
- labor and professional organizations
- parent and student groups
- public policy organizations, and
- all members of the Governor's Workforce Development Council

With each of the notices and to anyone who called expressing an interest in the Public Hearing, Council staff supplied a list of questions (see appendix) to suggest

testimony on topics of concern to the Council. These questions involved:

- The current and future state of secondary vocational education
- The current and future state of postsecondary vocational education
- Multi-sector partnerships and collaborative efforts to coordinate workforce education and training in Minnesota
- Interagency partnerships and collaborative efforts to coordinate workforce education and training in Minnesota
- The current and future effects of the Governor's Workforce Development Council on public workforce education and training
- The future role of the State Council with respect to vocational and technical education policy analysis, research, and evaluation

Announcement of the Public Hearing resulted in such strong interest that each person's testimony was limited to ten minutes to accommodate everyone interested in speaking. Thirteen individuals testified during the three hours of this Public Hearing. They represented several state agencies, local education agencies, professional and public policy organizations and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

The testimony was brisk and to the point. All testimony was recorded and transcribed. From the transcript Council staff then compiled comments that illustrated themes repeated by several speakers or topics of importance to individual speakers. The following comments represent the significant testimony to the Council at its 1996 Public Hearing. All remarks in brackets are those added by Council staff to clarify the testimony.

Compilation of Comments

The Economy and Workforce Education and Training

Secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical education will play an important role not only in ensuring employability, but in maximizing earning power at all stages of an individual's work life.

From 1979 to 1993, the real [adjusted for inflation] hourly pay of most U. S. workers fell. According to the Economic Policy Institute, wage reductions have been the most severe for entry level jobs for recent high school graduates, particularly young men in blue collar occupations. The [adjusted] hourly wage for a young male high school graduate worker with one to five years of experience in the U.S. in 1993 was 30.3 percent less than that of a worker with equivalent age, experience, and qualifications in 1973.

Nearly 51 percent of Minnesotans have less than or equal to a high school diploma. Only 22 percent of Minnesotans have a baccalaureate degree or greater. Yet the people who have lost the most ground [economically] in the 80's and the 90's are those with a high school diploma or less.

According to the Minnesota Department of Economic Security Research Office, only about 29 percent of the net job growth through the year 2001 will require either extensive managerial experience or a minimum of a four year degree. Over 48 percent of the net growth in the labor market will be in jobs that require a high school diploma or two to three years of postsecondary education.

While there is some evidence that the rate of job displacement is not any greater now than it was in the 1980's, there is an understanding that global competition and rapid technological change have increased the likelihood of job dislocation during one's work life regardless of one's occupation.

Spending on public education in Minnesota once represented 19 percent of the total state budget. That proportion has fallen to 13 percent and is continuing to decline.

Secondary Vocational Technical Education

While funding and legislative support seems to have diminished for secondary vocational education, there are still almost 90,000 secondary students taking vocational courses in Minnesota. When budgets are restricted, more expensive programs [such as vocational programs] suffer a disproportionate share of program reduction.

There are three recent trends that have had a negative impact on secondary vocational technical education:

- There has been a general erosion in secondary vocational leadership in Minnesota. Since Minnesota eliminated the local reimbursement for vocational administration, the number of professional staff assigned to vocational leadership positions has declined drastically. Vocational directors who have retired often have not been replaced. Rules have been amended to negate administrative requirements in vocational areas. Existing vocational directors have been assigned other duties, including those of alternative learning center or community education directors. Some have been reassigned to classroom teaching.
- The early 1980's saw the elimination of equipment reimbursement for secondary vocational education, resulting in a steady decline in the quality, quantity, state of repair, and relevance of much of the equipment used in vocational education programs.
- A third major area of concern deals with programs rules, staff licensure, and staff development. While the relaxation of rules regarding these three may pave the way for local innovation, this also provides greater opportunity for negative effects on program integrity, content, and program offerings.

Vocational education, through the school-to-work legislation and other initiatives, is beginning to provide a driving force for the reform of K-12—possibly even K-16—education in the state.

Tech Prep has been an absolute miracle in several ways. The overall nationwide awareness of this initiative and its components—integrated academic and vocational education, articulated secondary and postsecondary levels, the development of new curriculum and materials, and others—have assisted in establishing new levels of experiences for students. Specifically:

- Coupling the school-based activities with work-site experiences—apprenticeship, job shadowing and other appropriately supervised job-related

experiences—can go a long way toward providing excellent material for a better quality workforce, as well as providing each student with skills and experiences for future success in the world of work.

- There also has been extensive articulation between secondary and postsecondary education courses and programs resulting from the implementation of Tech Prep. The relationship and interaction between secondary and postsecondary vocational technical education is probably better today than it has been for 20 years.
- Tech Prep has been foundational in terms of bringing about reform in the public schools. It has funded numerous applied academic courses—applied mathematics, applied science, principles of technology, and applied communications.
- One of the major accomplishments of the tech prep initiative is the development of local and regional consortia that include secondary and postsecondary education, business and industry, labor, government, and the community. This type of advisory or administrative structure is becoming the core of our developing school-to-work system.

Local multi-sector partnerships might be able to provide better direction to the programs than educators can by themselves. These partnerships must be supported through staffing and technical assistance.

The tech prep consortia have also resulted in a renewed interest in identifying and collecting information on vocational and technical education students. One consortium that engaged in more rigorous data collections found the number of students identified as vocational and technical education students doubled between 1995 and the end of this past school year [1995-96]. The number of students identified as being enrolled in applied academic courses at one of its high schools increased by 300 percent between Fall 1995 and Fall 1996.

The most important role of the school-to-work legislation and initiative is its focus on total school reform.

High schools in many of the suburban areas, which historically focused on liberal arts, are implementing new educational models that address career pathways for every student. For instance, one Tech Prep consortium in a suburban area helped create a technology careers academy serving several local high schools. The focus of this academy, beginning in the tenth and eleventh grades, is on engineering and manufacturing technology.

The future of secondary vocational education in Minnesota should continue to be as an integral component of the school-to-work transition system through local and regional consortia and it should be a driving force on focusing and providing a systemic and

coherent K through 12 through [grade] 16 career path for everyone.

To remain viable, secondary vocational education in Minnesota *must* define itself with respect to the Graduation Rule and the Profile of Learning.

Secondary vocational education needs to continue and expand its involvement with local multi-sectors partnerships.

Another concern for secondary vocational education must be that of working on the development of a comprehensive data system for all state agencies, relative to types and availability of jobs and other market information, and should include follow-up on the outcomes for students.

The Governor's Workforce Development Council and the Public Workforce Education, Training, and Employment System

The Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) is just coming together as a Council and beginning to define itself and its mission, although legislation specifically describes some issues that it must address.

While the GWDC has not yet produced a particular vision statement, a vision for the GWDC might be: "Minnesotans will have easy access to lifelong learning and working opportunities and Minnesota businesses will be globally competitive."

The GWDC is divided into three committees: Youth Development, Workforce Development, and the Workforce Center System.

- The Youth Development Committee will be looking at school-to-work (STW) and will try to turn STW into a whole movement of reform that changes not just educational institutions, but all the related systems and structures concerned with how we think about learning and working in Minnesota.
- The Workforce Development Committee will be concerned with the whole area of welfare-to-work and work-to-work.
- The Workforce Center System Committee will look at the structural issues concerning how organizations and institutions, agencies and programs come together into something that is presumably an array of services people want.

The entire workforce education and training system is faced with several challenges:

- a common need to develop and identify the emerging skills
- a knowledge of projected job openings
- the need for an automated listing of [occupationally-related] program and course offerings
- performance data on programs, courses and the institutions or agencies that provide them
- valid and reliable information on the wants and needs of employers
- knowledge of how the system can identify and teach skill sets, certify the competency in those skills sets, and provide flexible entries and exits to training

The workforce education and training system must link the users of occupational labor market information with the producers of that information—the Bureau of Labor Statistics

on a national level and the Economic Security Research Division in the State of Minnesota.

The Occupational Information System helps provide supply and demand information to planners so they have a sense of which occupations have an increased demand or may have a limited supply of jobs for graduates or workers.

The Minnesota Occupation Information Coordinating Committee is developing an Internet journal—funded with Education and Employment Transition System funds—to provide occupational projections to educational planners.

The Department of Economic Security is working with the technical colleges on a project called Work Keys. Staff from Economic Security are going into companies, analyzing jobs and determining the skills required for those jobs. Staff from Economic Security then work with the technical colleges to provide the training to address the perceived skill deficiencies of new workers in those occupations.

The Minnesota Workforce Center System is working well because of a partnership established between state officials, local elected officials, and community and business leaders. They have collaborated to develop a system resulting in their strong investment in this local system. One of the reasons it is so beneficial is that local involvement provides variety and flexibility tailored to the needs of the local area.

There are 17 regional Work Force Councils at this time. These are aligned approximately with the previous JTPA service delivery areas. Six of these areas now have established and certified workforce centers. There will be 40 such centers established throughout the state during the coming year [1996-97].

Local competition among potential service providers is encouraged by the local workforce councils.

The workforce centers will be linked up by a computer network system. One use of this network will be to carry a statewide career information network.

Vocational Technical Education in the Prisons of Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Corrections has had partnerships with technical colleges in its adult prisons for about nine years.

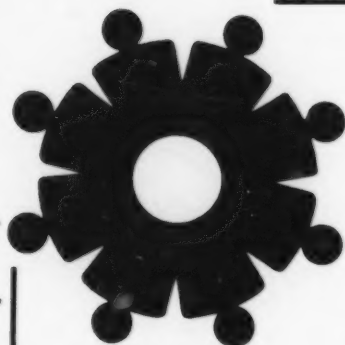
Studies show overwhelmingly that those people who complete education programs in prison are less at risk of returning to prison. In addition, the more education they complete, the lower the probability they will return.

Two problems—yet to be overcome—are data follow up and [transitional] support for inmates after they are released. The system does not know, for instance, how many non-graduates who have had some course work get jobs versus those who complete their programs.

Appendix

Questions of Interest to the State Council for its 1996 Public Hearing

1. From your perspective, what is the current state of vocational and technical education in the secondary schools of Minnesota?
What has been the effect of Tech Prep in the secondary schools in Minnesota?
What has been the effect of School-to-Work in the secondary schools in Minnesota?
2. What should be the emphasis of secondary vocational education programs in Minnesota?
3. From your perspective, what is the current state of postsecondary vocational and technical education in Minnesota?
What has been the effect of the consolidation of the state colleges and universities (MnSCU) on the technical colleges in Minnesota?
What concerns or issues surrounding this development need to be addressed in the future?
4. Are partnerships and collaborative efforts, at both the local and state level, becoming the means through which many workforce development activities are being designed and delivered?
Which collaborative activities have worked well?
What issues or concerns have not been resolved?
How can these partnerships or collaboratives be improved?
5. What is the appropriate interaction among secondary vocational and technical education, postsecondary vocational and technical education, and various governmental and non-governmental employment and training organizations in developing a true education and employment transitions system in the state of Minnesota?
6. How has the landscape of vocational technical education and public employment and training changed in Minnesota with the advent of the Governor's Workforce Development Council? What changes do you believe might occur in the future as a result of this development?
7. What do you recommend as the future role of the State Council with respect to policy analysis, research, or evaluation of vocational and technical education among the agencies, organizations, or systems delivering this service in Minnesota?



The logo of the State Council on Vocational Technical Education is an abstract representation of the citizen-councilors assembled at a round table. Designed by a commercial art student at Alexandria Technical College, the design was selected in 1982 from 69 entries submitted by vocational students in Minnesota's high schools, secondary cooperative centers, and technical colleges. The Council made its selection on the basis of a recommendation by a panel of representatives from the graphic arts, public relations, and media industries in Minnesota.

Purpose of the Council

The State Council on Vocational Technical Education is designed to further public-private collaboration for the advancement of quality vocational programs responsive to labor market needs. Established in 1969 and designated as a state agency in 1985, the Council comprises 13 members appointed by the Governor. Seven members represent the private sector interests of agriculture, business, industry, and labor. Six of the members represent vocational technical education institutions, career guidance and counseling organizations, special education, and targeted populations.

The Council advises the Governor, the State Board of Technical Colleges, the State Board of Education, the Governor's Job Training Council, the business community, the general public, and the U.S. Secretaries of Education and Labor. The Council advises on development of the annual state vocational plan; provides consultation on the establishment of program evaluation criteria and state technical committees; analyzes the spending distribution and the availability of vocational programs, services, and activities; reports on the extent to which equity to quality programs is provided targeted populations; recommends procedures to enhance public participation in vocational technical education; recommends improvements that emphasize business and labor concerns; evaluates the delivery systems assisted under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA); and advises on policies that the state should pursue to strengthen vocational technical education, as well as initiatives that the private sector could undertake to enhance program modernization.

To enhance effectiveness in gathering information, the Council holds at least one town meeting each year at which the public is encouraged to express its concern about vocational technical education in Minnesota. To enhance its effectiveness in providing information, the Council publishes a quarterly newsletter, an annual directory, and a biennial report. These publications as well as project and activity reports are available to the public.

Information on the date, time, and location of meetings and other activities is available by calling the Council Offices at 612/296-4202.

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